

# **PRISON POPULATION ESTIMATES: UPDATE**

Prepared for the  
**Legislative Finance Committee**  
by

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## BACKGROUND

The 1999 Legislature appropriated general fund of \$30 million for the 2001 Biennium to the Department of Corrections (DOC) for contract inmate beds. Contract beds in the budget include funds for all three regional prisons at Cascade, Dawson and Missoula counties, the cost to place male and female inmates in private prison facilities either in-state or out-of-state, and the cost of housing state inmates in county jails pending transfer to a state correctional facility.

The legislature further defined the appropriation for contract beds as “restricted” in House Bill 2. Consequently any remaining balance in the appropriation for contract beds not expended at the end of fiscal 2001, must be reverted to the general fund. The agency cannot redirect the use of these funds to purposes not intended in the language of HB2.

The appropriation for secure beds was built upon projected male inmate totals of 2,733 at the end of fiscal 2000 and 2,884 at the end of fiscal 2001; and female inmate projections of 289 at the end of fiscal 2000 and 323 at the end of fiscal 2001 (see tables 1 and 2). In the budget submitted to the OBPP by the department last fall, the department had requested a budget based upon male inmate numbers of 3,035 in fiscal 2000 and 3,281 in fiscal 2001. OBPP submitted a budget to the legislature which projected male inmates growth through 2001 simply by adding 151 male inmates each year to the actual fiscal year 1998 ending inmate number. The OBPP accepted the DOC projections for female inmates. This resulted in reductions from DOC male inmate projections of 302 and \$5.3 million in fiscal 2000 and 397 fewer inmates in fiscal 2001 with a budget reduction of \$7.0 million.

The legislature adopted the contract bed budget based upon the OBPP inmate projection figures and approved the budget for contract beds as requested in the Executive Budget.

## CURRENT STATUS

Tables 1 and 2 compare the inmate projection figures used by the legislature when appropriating the budgets for Secure Custody with the actual fiscal 1999-year end totals and with the new projections of the department based upon the most recent inmate totals.

As shown in the Table 1, actual adult male fiscal 1999 year end totals for secure custody inmates were 2,546, or 36 less than had been determined using the OBPP totals. Revised projections for fiscal year 2000 are 42 less male inmates and for fiscal 2001, 41 less male inmates are projected than the projections presented in the Legislative Fiscal Report for the 2001 biennium.

Female projections for fiscal year 2000 are now revised downward from 289 to 271 and for fiscal 2001 are revised from 323 down to 289.

<b>TABLE 1</b> <b>ADULT MALE INMATE POPULATIONS</b>									
Correctional Institution	Fiscal 99 Fiscal Report	Fiscal 99 Actual	Fiscal 99 Change	Fiscal 2000 Fiscal Report	Fiscal 2000 Projected	Fiscal 2000 Change	Fiscal 2001 Fiscal Report	Fiscal 2001 Projected	Fiscal 2001 Change
MSP	1330	1356	26	1330	1300	(30)	1330	1300	(30)
REGIONAL									
Cascade	152	151	(1)	152	137	(15)	152	137	(15)
Dawson	144	127	(17)	144	130	(14)	144	130	(14)
Missoula	0	0	0	144	130	(14)	144	130	(14)
	296	278	(18)	440	397	(43)	440	397	(43)
PRIVATE									
Crossroads	0	0	0	269	338	69	380	418	38
Other	257	266	9	0	12	12	0	30	30
	257	266	9	269	350	81	380	448	68
COUNTY JAILS	110	88	(22)	0	0	0	0	0	0
BOOT CAMP	50	25	(25)	50	35	(15)	50	35	(15)
PRERELEASE	330	356	26	380	411	31	420	451	31
ISP	190	160	(30)	245	173	(72)	245	187	(58)
TRANS LIVING	49	47	(2)	49	25	(24)	49	25	(24)
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>2582</b>	<b>2546</b>	<b>(36)</b>	<b>2733</b>	<b>2691</b>	<b>(42)</b>	<b>2884</b>	<b>2843</b>	<b>(41)</b>

<b>TABLE 2</b> <b>FEMALE INMATE POPULATIONS</b>									
Correctional Institution	Fiscal 99 Fiscal Report	Fiscal 99 Actual	Fiscal 99 Change	Fiscal 2000 Fiscal Report	Fiscal 2000 Projected	Fiscal 2000 Change	Fiscal 2001 Fiscal Report	Fiscal 2001 Projected	Fiscal 2001 Change
MWP	70	70	0	70	70	0	70	70	0
CONTRACT BEDS	40	48	8	55	57	2	89	65	(24)
COUNTY JAILS	0	19	19	0	0	0	0	0	0
BOOT CAMP	0	2	2	0	3	3	0	3	3
PRERELEASE	104	85	(19)	124	103	(21)	124	113	(11)
ISP	40	27	(13)	40	30	(10)	40	30	(10)
TRANS LIVING	0	2	2	0	8	8	0	8	8
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>254</b>	<b>253</b>	<b>(1)</b>	<b>289</b>	<b>271</b>	<b>(18)</b>	<b>323</b>	<b>289</b>	<b>(34)</b>

Data provided by the DOC would seem to indicate that institutional changes in the processing of prisoners are apparently reducing the rate of growth of inmate projections. According to DOC, the numbers of inmates paroled annually by the Montana Board of Pardons has increased from 359 in fiscal 19963 to 640 in fiscal 1999. The length of stay until being paroled has been reduced from an average of 32 months, 21 days in fiscal 1997 to 30 months, 18 days in fiscal 1999.

Further, the average length of stay for male inmates in a Montana correctional secure facility has decreased from 38.5 months in fiscal 1994 to 28.4 months in fiscal 1999. Female inmates over the same period have an average length of stay that has dropped from 23.9 months to 17.1 months.

### FISCAL IMPACTS OF NEW PROJECTIONS

Assuming the new inmate projections provided by the department are realized, Table 3 shows the calculated savings to the general fund for the 2001 biennium, if the remaining restricted appropriation is reverted. The contract bed budget is determined using average daily population (ADP) and not fiscal year-end populations as are shown in the inmate population projection in Tables 1 and 2. These numbers are converted to ADP by assuming that the ADP would be the average between the beginning population for a fiscal year and the ending population for that fiscal year.

<b>TABLE 3</b> <b>Estimated Cost Reductions</b>				
	Fiscal 2000 Adult Male	Fiscal 2000 Adult Female	Fiscal 2001 Adult Male	Fiscal 2001 Adult Female
ADP Inmate Reduction	-39	-9.5	-41.5	-26
# Days in Fiscal Year	365	365	364	364
Cost Per Day (Est)	\$49.34	\$68.00	\$50.45	70.04
Total Budget Reduction	(\$702,355)	(\$235,790)	(\$15,156)	(\$662,859)
Fiscal Year Total		(\$938,145)		(\$678,015)
Biennial Total				(\$1,616,160)

As shown in Table 3, it is projected that the department may have reversions of \$1.6 million to the general fund at the end of fiscal 2001 from the appropriation for contract beds. By definition these funds are restricted for contract beds and cannot be transferred elsewhere in the department.

## SUMMARY

It is encouraging news that actual inmate numbers for fiscal 1999 are down and that new DOC inmate projections for the remainder of the 2001 biennium are also being revised downward. However, the change in inmate populations from what was projected only year ago does highlight the ongoing concerns of the legislature that inmate projections have not been reliable for several biennia. Had the legislature appropriated general fund to DOC based upon the inmate projections of the department and not used the more conservative projections of the OBPP, the legislature would have committed over \$15 million in general fund that may not have been needed. This is a significant amount that would have impacted tax policy decisions as well as the availability of general fund for other government responsibilities including education and human services. Decisions committing funds to the construction of new correctional facilities by the long range planning committee are also based upon these numbers.

There remains a strong need for improved forecasting of inmate populations by the executive branch for the coming biennium and beyond.

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